HAPPY WRITING

**Learn to write —
follow the Magic Pencil**

House

House

AMSTRAD CPC 464

- Teaches children to write with the help of the 'magic pencil'.
- Shows them how to form their letters and numbers correctly.
- Can be used with or without help from adults.

SPECIAL FEATURES

- Choice of small letters, capital letters or numbers.
- Can be used to practise a single letter or number, a set of similar letters, a word or a set of words so covering wide age range and abilities.
- Speed adjustable to the age and ability of the user.
- Word list can be changed as needed.
- Holds childrens' attention with guidelines pulled by tractors, bright coloured figures, attractive tune and a 'magic pencil' with their name on it.

Suitable for 3 to 6 year olds, or where special practice is needed.

HAPPY WRITING

The program draws out bright coloured letters, numbers or words, with the moving 'magic pencil' point showing clearly where to start the figure, which direction to take, and where to end. The speed with which the figure is drawn out can be adjusted to suit the user. The set of three figures or the word is initially drawn out on the top of the screen, between the lines pulled across by the tractors. The pencil then appears and the program waits for the child to press the space bar and begin to follow on paper each figure as it is drawn out on the screen. A pause is allowed between each figure and a tune played as a reward for each figure completed.

In the event of any problem with the use of this program, or ideas as to improvements which could be incorporated, please do not hesistate to contact BES at the address on the back cover.

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INTRODUCTION

This program has been designed to assist children to write, and in particular, to form their letters or numbers correctly. It is recommended for use with children between 3 and 6 years old, and in cases where specific practice is needed.

It is recognised that there is no one 'right' way of either the motion of forming figures, or the figures themselves. Regional and cultural variations result in areas where the verticals of l, h, etc. are looped, and others where they are not. The number of combinations of the variations on font are enormous, and whilst serious consideration was given to including these as options, it was eventually discarded as the program menus would have become too cumbersome to use effectively.

Prior to launch, the program was extensively trialled both in the home and in schools, and with a sample which included specialist writing experts. The final font represents the view of the majority though it will be seen as a compromise by some.

The microcomputer is used in this program as a means of presenting to children the dynamic aspects of writing, overcoming some of the shortfalls of traditional methods, and in

particular, supplementing the demonstration of direction and form by adults. In addition, the program allows the child by the simple use of the <SPACE> bar to repeat the forming of a figure or continue the demonstration of a word.

The main program operates in two parts. Initially, the set of three figures (or word under options 3 and 4) is traced out by the 'magic pencil' as a moving yellow dot between lines, leaving behind red figures. The program then halts with a pencil appearing, (featuring the child's name), awaiting operation of the <SPACE> bar.

The writing speed can be adjusted to suit the requirements of the user, and in common with most BES programs, use of the ESCape key at any point returns the user to the main menu.

LOADING

It is best to press CTRL and SHIFT and whilst holding them down, press and release the ESCape key. This resets the computer before loading. The cassette should be placed in the Datacorder with the label upwards and the tape wound back to the beginning.

Simply press CTRL and the small ENTER

key, followed by pressing the PLAY key on the Datacorder and then pressing any other key.

Loading of the program takes about five minutes in all.

Having completed loading, the program displays the title and copyright screen for a few seconds. No entries are necessary and the program will automatically move on to the main menu screen.

THE MAIN PROGRAM

The program presents the user with a small succession of 'menus' from which a choice can be made. Pressing ESCape twice at any point will result in the program returning to the main menu, which offers the following options:

1. Practise one by one

This option allows the choice of a particular figure for practice. Either a number or a letter can be chosen, and in the latter case the usual operation of CAPS LOCK or SHIFT keys will select capitals. After selection of an appropriate character, followed by the usual ENTER, the childs name should be typed in. The program then moves on to the main screen. The two tractors chug across the screen drawing the lines defining the upper and lower

limits of full height figures. After this has been done, the 'magic pencil' makes the yellow spot appear at the correct starting point for the formation of the figure, and the figure is drawn out. Note that the speed of the operation can be selected under Option 6 appropriate to the age and skill of the user.

Sound has been introduced to the program both as an aid to learning and a motivation/reward. During the figure formation on the screen the pitch of the note is related to the position of the drawing point between the lines, i.e. the higher the position the higher the note. The sound can thus provide an additional guide to the child during the time the figure is being formed on paper. The break in sound as the pencil leaves to commence a different stroke is again of some assistance to the child in particular circumstances.

Three figures are drawn out, followed by the appearance of a pencil with the child's name, a visual indication for the user to be ready to write. The operation of the <SPACE> bar then leads to a bar of a well-known nursery rhyme, and the tractors setting out a second set of lines. The drawing of a single figure is then carried out on the screen, and the child is encouraged to form the figure in the same

manner on paper. The program awaits the second operation of the <SPACE> bar, and following this completes a further cycle, giving the child a further opportunity to see the formation of the figure. The cycle is finally repeated one more time.

2. Practise a Series

The options available under this heading are as follows:

> (1) Small letters: this leads to the option to choose one of a series involving letters with related shapes, vis:
> 1) c, a, d, g, q, o, e, s
> 2) r, n, m, h, b, p
> 3) i, l, k, t, f, j
> 4) v, w, x, z
> 5) u, y
> The letter series chosen will then appear at the screen in the above order, allowing children to use the program without supervision for a more extended period of time. Operation of the <SPACE> bar at the end of each letter set leads to the following letter in the series, or back to the main menu on completion.

(2) Numbers: Choice of this option leads directly to the program, where the screen will feature the numbers 0 through to 9. Operation of the <SPACE> bar after each number set leads on to the next higher number, or return the user to the main menu on completion of the set featuring '9'.

(3) Capital Letters: Leads to the option to choose one of the following series:
1) A, B, C, D, E
2) F, G, H, I, J
3) K, L, M, N, O
4) P, Q, R, S, T
5) U, V, W, X, Y, Z

Operation of the <SPACE>bar after each letter set leads on to the next letter in the series, or back to the main menu on completion.

(4) Your own series: A series of up to a total of 15 figures can be entered which will then appear in the same order of entry at the screen. The figures can be a mixture of upper and lower case letters, and numbers. This option allows the choice of characters which need repeated practice. Operation of the <SPACE> bar after each figure set

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leads to the next figure, or back to the menu after the last figure.

3. Practise a Word

Entry of up to 10 figures, followed by ENTER leads to the set being drawn on the screen, the size of figures on the screen reducing in size as the total of figures increases. Here again, the figures can be a mixture of upper and lower case letters, and numbers. The option is particularly applicable for children learning to write words or their name, although with the limit of figures (imposed by the minimum size at which a letter is still clear to the child) longer names are not able to be entered.

In the same manner as before, the set of figures is drawn out, followed by a pause requiring operation of the <SPACE> bar. The program then draws out each figure one at a time, with a pause for the <SPACE> bar to be pressed between each. Completion is marked by the tune, and the program reverts to the main menu.

4. Practise the Word List

Incorporated in the program is a short word list which can be used to give children more

continuous practice than that allowed under Option 3. When the program is loaded, the list comprises the following words:

1.	good	6.	visit
2.	quick	7.	box
3.	bath	8.	zebra
4.	when	9.	play
5.	yes	10.	come

The choice of this option leads to the words in the above order appearing on the screen in the same way as Option 3, but in this case operation of the <SPACE> bar leads on to the next word in the list being displayed. This allows the more able child to practise figures unsupervised over a longer period of time than with previous options.

The contents of the list can be changed as described in the following section.

5. Change the word list

This choice leads to the option to erase the word list in the program, or to amend it. New words can be entered through the keyboard and ENTER pressed at the end of each word. Pressing ESCape on completion of the words needed leads back to the main menu, with the new word list being available for use until either the list is further changed, or the computer switched off.

6. Set Speed

The speed with which figures are drawn out can be varied according to the capability of the child. The higher the number, the faster a figure is drawn out.

THE HAPPY SERIES

The Happy Series is a range of programs from BES aimed at children in the age range of 3–6 years. The range covers among others number, letter and writing skills.

One of the companion programs to 'Happy Writing' is 'Happy Numbers', which helps children recognise numbers and count from 1 to 9. The program features a simple but appealing score display, as well as the usual detailed MONITOR recording of childrens' entries. The program can be set to help practice of 'difficult' numbers. The program is aimed at a very young audience and consequently is exceptionally easy to use. It helps children to learn their numbers and count without the need of reading skills. Attractive graphics make this a favourite with 3 to 5 year olds.

As with all BES programs, the speed can be adjusted to suit the ability and requirements of the user.

A further program is 'Happy Letters' which is a letter recognition and matching program for 3 to 6 year olds. The program features the following options:
1. Matching lower case letters
2. Matching lower case letters/words
3. Matching upper/lower cases
4. Finding upper case keys
5. Finding upper case keys given lower case letters.

The program is again very easy to use. In the early options, the child need only use two keys – ENTER and the <SPACE> bar. The motivational aspects of the game are animated fishes and crocodiles, both of which have proved very popular both during the extended trials which BES carries out in selected schools, and during use in both home and school.

The program covers both lower and upper case letters and the recognition of the corresponding letters. In order to familiarise children with the keyboard there is also the option to find keys corresponding to letters on the screen. This has been extended to match lower case letters on the screen with the keys. This is designed to help overcome the problem of the keyboard being limited to upper case letters on the keys.

OTHER BES PROGRAMS

'Happy Writing' is one of a series of Micro-computer programs produced by Bourne Educational Software Ltd with the aim of making learning both easy and enjoyable. The programs are aimed at both home and school use, and are designed to enable children of the appropriate age range to operate them readily through common use of such items as ESCape to return to a menu of program options; <SPACE> to move on to a next screen and so on.

A common feature with most BES programs is the BES MONITOR system, which allows the teacher, parent or child access to the specific entries made, so allowing identification of specific achievements or problem areas. This does not preclude the use in appropriate programs of a more simple and visible scoring system, which is designed to aid motivation.

BES programs are designed to be largely self-explanatory, and follow similar styles. Children rapidly familiarise themselves with new programs, and can use them if required with the minimum of help.

Other BES programs include:

Timeman One

The program helps children tell the time and set a clock. Attractive scoring with a man and a ladder keep childrens' interest. Choice of

twelve progressive stages of difficulty, together with the usual attractive sound, colour and monitoring facilities. (Age 4–9 years).

Timeman Two
Companion program covering minutes to the hour, half and quarter hours and the 24-hour clock. Same attractive features as Timeman One with progressive stages of difficulty, together with attractive sound, colour and monitoring facilities. (Age range 4–10 years).

World-Wise
Two programs to stimulate children to 'teach the computer' about geography. Encourages the use of atlases and reference books, helps exam studies and introduces the use of the computer to store information. Data can be readily saved and reloaded at any time. (Age range 7–15 years).

Map Rally
Try to find the hidden checkpoints in a race against your opponent or the clock! Map co-ordinates and directions are soon mastered as children learn to control the cars. After each rally they can watch the cars retrace the routes taken, showing how well each driver did. (Age 7–13 years).

Animal/Vegetable/Mineral
This program provides hours of fun and enjoyment as the computer tries to guess the object a child has thought of. The computer's failure

to guess correctly encourages children to help the computer to tell the difference between the various objects. The program stimulates discussion and the use of reference books. Suitable for all ages 7 years and upwards.

Wordhang

This version of the traditional 'Hangman' spelling game has been described as "... the Rolls-Royce of them all"! Features over 250 words plus the ability to enter your own words – either individually or as a group (ideal for that weekly spelling list!). Improves spelling at all ages of 5 years and upwards.

THIS BOOKLET

BES programs always include explanatory booklets of this type to satisfy several objectives. Firstly, to identify the objectives of the program, and to give guidance as to some possible uses of the program based on experiences during the extensive in-classroom and in-house testing period. Secondly, they are designed to give an understanding of the sequences encountered in the programs, since in many situations the time of access to the micro is at a premium. Thirdly, the booklet will assist in using the substantial content of BES programs to the full, through reference to it before, during and after use of them on the micro.

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hour

". . . Happy Writing turns out to be a really
cleverly designed program that helps children
with letter formation in a unique and well-
thoughtout way."

Educational Computing

BES